

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

S E C R E T STATE 013434

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM TUNIS DATED DECEMBER 23, 1977
SENT SECSTATE WASHDC IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

S E C R E T TUNIS 9120

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, TS

SUBJ: COMSIXTHFLT INVITED USE MENZEL-BOURGUIBA

REF: STATE 295497

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED IN REFTEL
I SAW FOREIGN MINISTER HABIB CHATTY DECEMBER 22 AND INFORMED
HIM THAT THE USG HAD GIVEN LENGTHY CONSIDERATION TO THE
GOT'S OFFER OF SHIP REPAIR FACILITIES AT MENZEL-BOURGUIBA
BUT HAS DETERMINED THAT THERE IS NO PRESENT SIXTH FLEET
REQUIREMENT FOR THE USE OF THOSE FACILITIES. I EXPRESSED
OUR THANKS FOR THE COURTESY AND COOPERATION OF THE GOT IN
ENABLING US NAVY OFFICIALS TO SURVEY THE FACILITIES
THOROUGHLY, BUT NO FURTHER VISITS BY SURVEY TEAM WOULD BE
SCHEDULED AND NO SHIPS WERE TO BE PROGRAMMED FOR REPAIRS.

2. I TOLD CHATTY THAT I HAD ALSO BEEN INSTRUCTED TO

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EXPRESS AGAIN WASHINGTON'S UNHAPPINESS OVER THE INCREASED
OPERATIONAL CAPACITY THAT USE OF MENZEL-BOURGUIBA WAS
AFFORDING THE SOVIET FLEET. INDEED, I ADDED, CONCERN
OVER THE GOT'S OFFER TO THE SOVIETS HAD RECENTLY BEEN
THE SUBJECT OF SERIOUS DISCUSSION IN THE HIGHEST NATO
QUARTERS. WHEN CHATTY QUESTIONED ME AS TO WHEN SUCH
DISCUSSIONS HAD OCCURRED I TOLD HIM THAT TO MY RECOLLECTION

IT TOOK PLACE IN LATE OCTOBER/EARLY NOVEMBER, IN THE PERIOD PRECEDING THE USUAL FALL MEETING OF THE NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS.

3. CHATTY ASKED WHETHER WASHINGTON IN MY INSTRUCTIONS HAD MADE ANY COMMENT REGARDING TUNISIA'S PRIOR EXPLANATION, THAT ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS ALONE HAD LED THE GOT INTO THE SHIP REPAIR ARRANGEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS. I TOLD HIM THAT I HAD HAD NO WASHINGTON COMMENT REGARDING THIS POINT, BUT ASSURED HIM THAT THE GOT'S EXPLANATION OF ITS RATIONALE HAD ALREADY BEEN REGISTERED SEVERAL TIMES WITH WASHINGTON.

4. FINALLY, I REITERATED THE CONCERN OF THE GOT'S MANY FRIENDS IN WASHINGTON OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT TUNISIA'S IMAGE RISKED BEING TARNISHED IN THE EYES OF THOSE WHO WOULD INTERPRET IT AS A SLIGHT SHIFT IN THE GOT'S POLICY ORIENTATION. CHATTY HAD NO FURTHER COMMENT AND THE DISCUSSION WAS ENDED ON THIS NOTE.
MULCAHY UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

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